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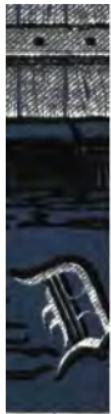
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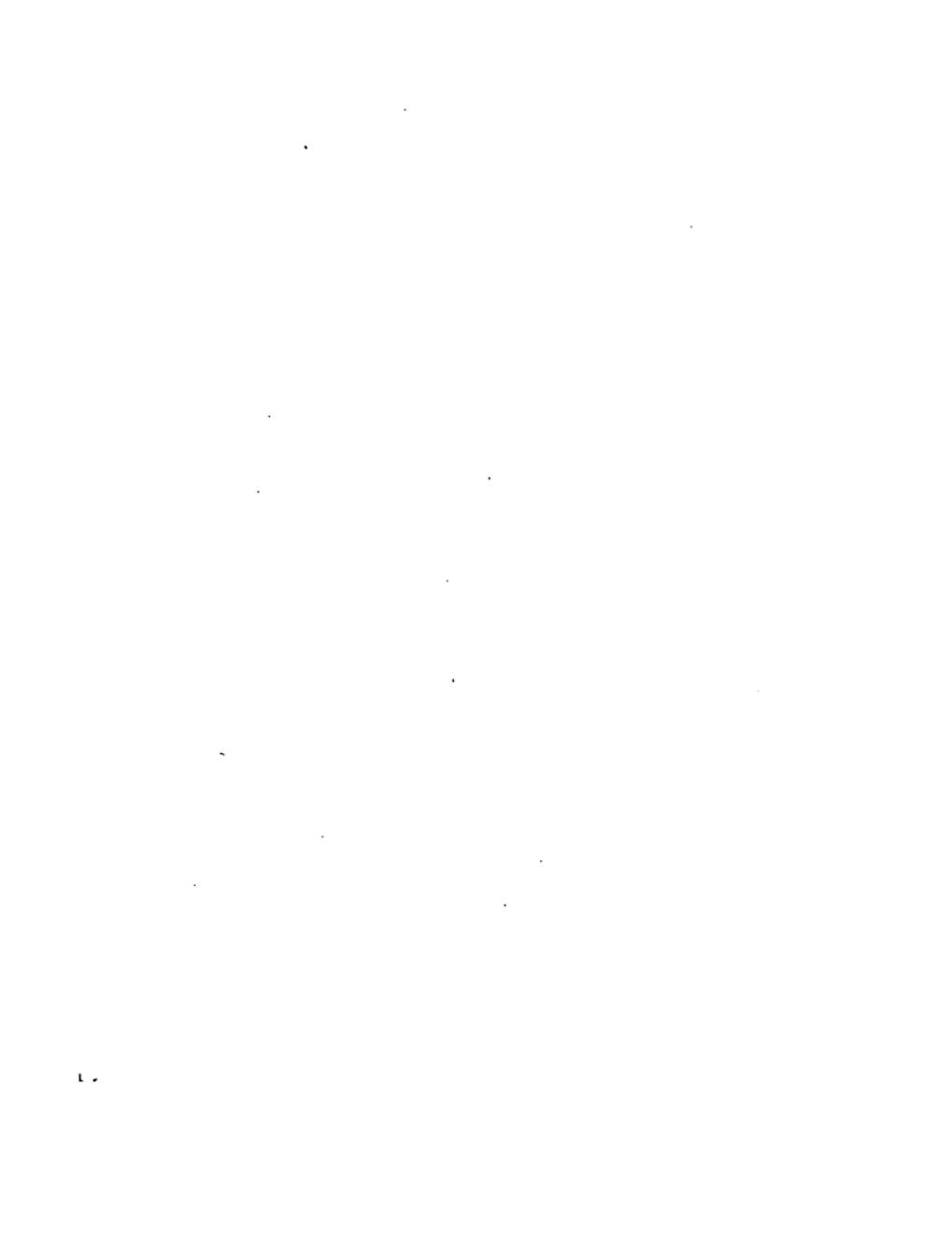
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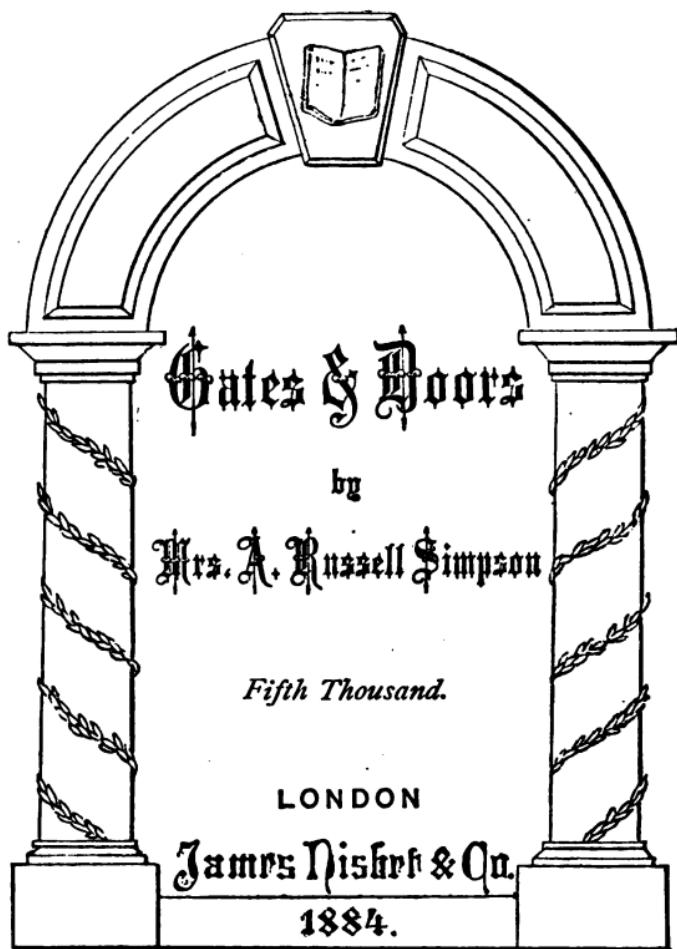
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BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT HEARETH
ME WATCHING DAILY AT MY GATES,
WAITING AT THE POSTS OF MY DOORS



100 . f . 206 .



*Morrison and Gibb, Edinburgh,
Printers to Her Majesty's Stationery Office.*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE study of ‘Gates and Doors’ has had a solemn sacredness since we heard how an honoured servant of Christ—the Rev. Robert Ireland of Portobello—lay at the gate of heaven speaking and thinking of these gates, and wishing, if he got well, to write a sermon on the subject. The day before his death he asked for the ninth Psalm, where the words occur, ‘Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death : that I may show forth all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.’ And here are his words : ‘As the gate of the city was the place of meeting and of converse, and

much talk and business went on at the gate, so at the gates of death the Lord speaks much to those whom He takes there, and teaches them things that they can learn nowhere else. I have been there, and the Lord has spoken much to me. Perhaps I shall be raised up to speak of Him here, in the gates of the daughter of Zion, but at any rate I shall in the gates of the heavenly city.' A few hours later he said, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that a poor sinner saved by grace may enter in !'

'The golden gates were opening
For another welcome guest ;
For a ransomed heir of glory
Was entering into rest.'

We have tried to lift the pen which fell from his hand, and surely the subject gains new interest as his voice seems to reach us through the half open gate of the city.

We are again indebted to Miss Hunter of Hafton for the attractive design on the outside of

our little book, and to Mr. Tatham Thompson for the frontispiece and title-page.

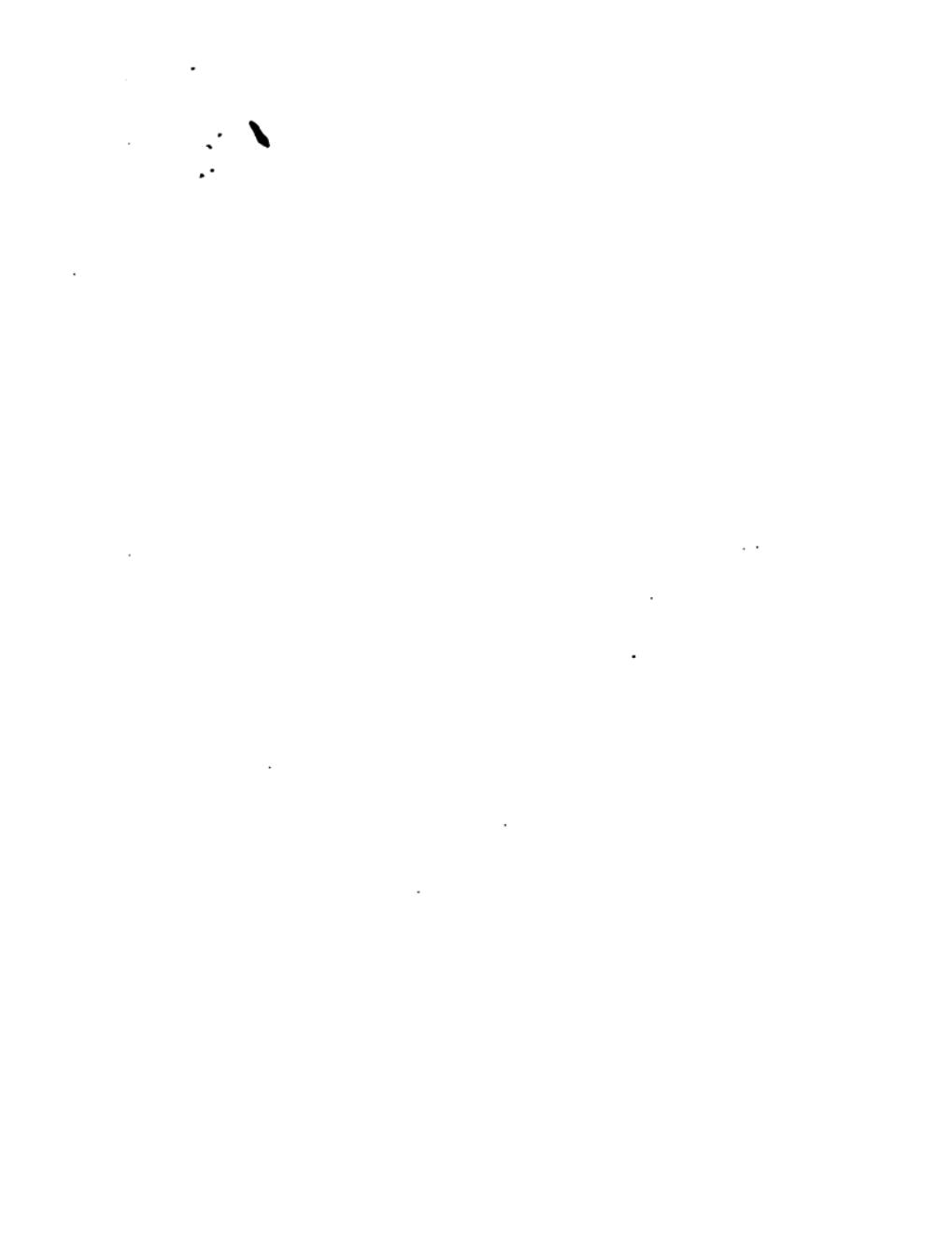
The study of gates seems naturally to follow 'Wells of Water' when we think of David's words, 'the Well that is at the gate.'

Old gates sometimes need new hinges. We mean this little book to be something like this for the Bibles of our young people; to help to open these gates more easily and more widely on the land of light to which they lead.

'The distant landscape draws not nigh
For all our gazing; but the soul
That upward looks may still descry
Nearer each day the brightening goal.'

M. S. S.

52 QUEEN STREET, EDINBURGH,
October. 1884.



CHAPTER I.

—o—

Wisdom's Gates.

' Ye servants of the Lord,
Each in his office wait,
Observant of His heavenly word,
And watchful at His gate.

' O happy servant he
In such a posture found !
He shall his Lord with rapture see,
And be with honour crowned.'

' Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.'—PROV. viii. 34.

' Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'—REV. xxii. 14.

LET us put our hand in that of Wisdom at the outset of this little book, and listen to her words which we have graven on our frontispiece, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching

daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.'

Philip said, with tears in his eyes as he kissed Alexander, after seeing him succeed in taming Bucephalus, 'Seek another kingdom, my son, that may be worthy thy abilities; for Macedonia is too small for thee.' The most advanced child of our Father feels he can never be worthy of such commendation for any progress he has made in divine wisdom. Still his Father meets him with this word at once of encouragement and allurement: 'There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.' 'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.'

We live in days of progress. What would Alexander say if he could see now the resources which are at the command of a great soldier or leader in any enterprise? True Science does not gainsay Revelation, as was shown at a meeting held in our northern capital, where great men from all quarters of the globe addressed the students at the Tercentenary of the University. And the two are going hand in hand to the remote corners of the earth.

Professor Henry Drummond, who has recently

visited Central Africa on such a combined mission, tells how, on the first night of his encampment on the shores of Lake Nyassa, after going to rest for the night, he heard a noise outside his tent. He rose and drew open the curtain of the tent door. The moonlight rays fell on this picture. The native lad whom the missionary had spared to serve him, saying he had no special talents, but could be thoroughly trusted, had gathered the little group of natives, and was holding family worship with them. He did not know the names of many places, but prayed for the five he knew, and nightly, however far they had gone, however tired they were, this gathering was never omitted.

Shall we let the poor African outstrip us who live amid the triumphs of civilization and the trophies of the Gospel? Or shall we be among those who are called blessed because they have waited and watched in meditation and prayer at Wisdom's Gates and Doors? It would be an interesting study to search all through the Bible for those who are called blessed, starting from the Mount of the Beatitudes. But in our opening chapter we can only take the two verses which head it, from Proverbs and Revelation. They

seem like folding-doors to the long gallery of the believer's experience. The doors at which we enter are always open ; the others are only opened to special people at special times, as when it is time to go in to the Father's house on high.

We have seen models of regions to which we could not ascend, as in Switzerland we saw one showing the different heights of the Alps. The first eight chapters of Proverbs are something like this—a father's plan or model for the life and conduct of his son. The central peak is Wisdom. In the first chapter we see her in the 'chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates,' where her message sounds, 'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?' In the third chapter we go down into a deep valley with mines of gold and precious stones as we read, 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, . . . for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies.' In the fourth chapter the high peak again rises above us : 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding.' And in our own chapter we catch a glimpse of it in the same position as in

the first—‘She crieth at the gates, . . . at the coming in at the doors.’ Only, here the mist that hung around her clears away. We see through the clouds of Old Testament language a bright light shining. It is the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. He is clothing Himself in Wisdom’s garb as He says to us: ‘The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way before His works of old.’ ‘Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.’

We find in one of Job’s sublimest chapters a road leading up to Wisdom’s gate and door. We all liked as children something mysterious, some new road, some hidden way, not knowing at what point we might emerge from the wood or thicket. Let us set out on Job’s pathway : ‘A path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.’ At the end of it we read over the Gate in shining letters, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding !’

It will be well spent time not only to watch at the gates, and wait at the posts of the doors, but also, during all our study, to walk as Job guides us,

feeling that each day's march, each Sabbath day's journey, is in pursuit of this Wisdom, this knowledge in the highest sense, even to find that God is making His Son unto us 'Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.'

When once we begin to wait at these doors, learning His will through His word, running in the way of His commandments, we shall fall in love with the occupation.

'To business that we love we rise betime,
And go to't with delight.'

And, as it is true of masters in any art, heroes in any struggle, discoverers in any land, that their one ideal becomes their passion : first they mastered it, now it masters them : so it will be with us.

Now as no one can easily bend himself to a new study or begin a difficult language after a certain age, we would implore the young to come to Wisdom's gates, to Wisdom Himself, while yet the dew of their youth is upon them.

'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'—
REV. xxii. 14.

These are the words which Bunyan saw written over Heaven's gate in letters of gold. One has said that if the Dreamer lived now and had read our Revised Version, he would have seen 'Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.'

We bless God that to the very end, up to the pearly gate, we may carry with us the blood. The fresh light which the Revisers throw on the Bible page only gives new encouragement to the blackest sinner, who feels he has not yet learnt to do His commandments, to enter with the dying thief, the passport of blood in his hand, through the gate on earth, and then he will sing with the dying believer when he comes to the further gateway, 'I am sweeping through the gates, washed in the blood of the Lamb.'

'Burst are all my prison bars,
And I soar beyond the stars,
To my Father's house, the bright and blest estate.
Lo ! the morn eternal breaks,
And the song immortal wakes !
Robed in whiteness, I am sweeping through the gate.'

To every road on earth there is an ending, to

every hill a summit, to every runner a goal. To very many this verse has been an arch of beauty over a dying pillow. At the end of guide-books, or at railway stations, you may see advertisements of hotels and their gardens, and when you come to the reality, you may feel yourself mocked. But this picture is real and true in every particular, with this difference, that when you get there you will say, 'The half was not told me.' This picture of these Gates is hung up at the very end of our Bible, with a deep significance, to allure us on, to keep us watching. Three times within a few verses does the Master call the watchful servants 'blessed.' He says, 'Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that He (margin) is near, even at the doors.'

We can understand these words, for last spring we went on a journey, and saw fig trees just like those Christ saw. It was the middle of April, but the spring was late on the Riviera after a strangely severe winter, when snow had fallen and icicles hung on the orange trees, and storms had destroyed the promise of the fields of flowers. But now spring

held holiday ; flowers appeared on the earth, the time of the singing of birds had come, and the fig tree put forth her green leaves. As the sun shone down, the lizards danced, the dragon-flies hummed, they all seemed to say, 'A few more breaths of spring's soft wind, a few more raindrops, a few more rays of sunshine, and summer will be here.' We came to the gate of a lovely garden, and looked through the iron railing, but this was not the day for visitors, and we did not then know the owner. We looked for a time at a wealth of beauty from the outside.

A few more heart-beats, a few more years, and He shall have come, and with Him eternal summer to our souls !

'Spread Thy love's broad banner o'er us ;
Give us strength to serve and wait,
Till the glory breaks before us,
Through the City's open gate.'



CHAPTER II.

Suffering without the Gate.

‘There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

‘There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin ;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

‘Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.’

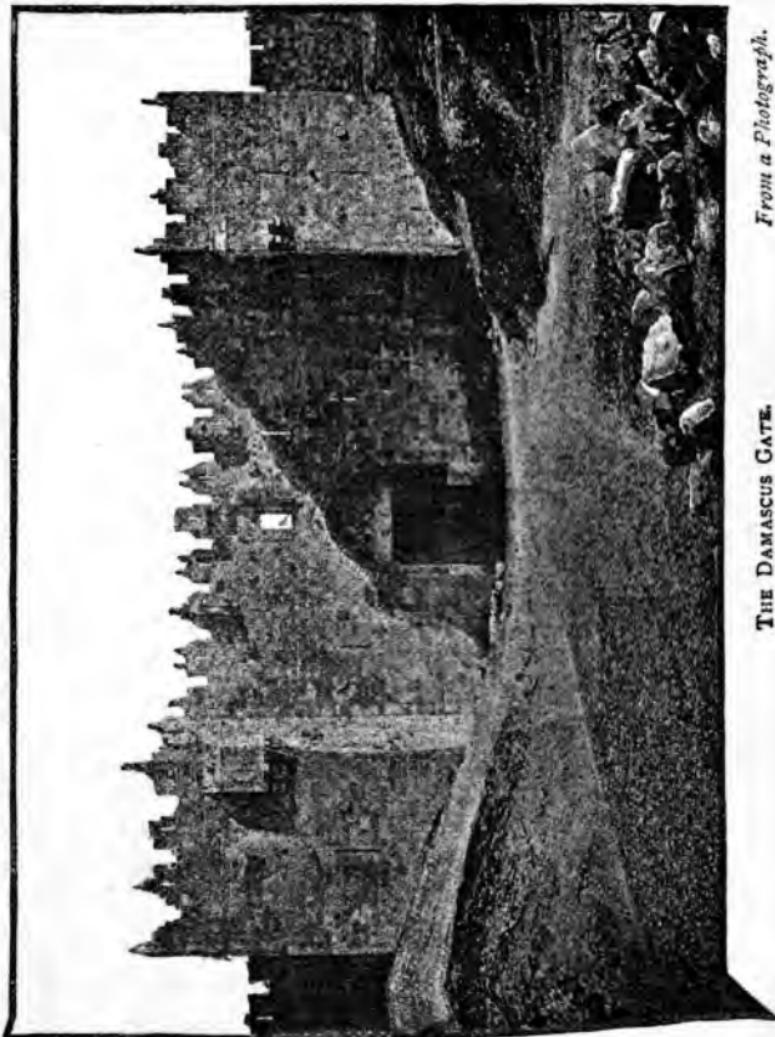
‘Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.’—HEB. xiii. 12.

‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’—JOHN xv. 13.

O F all the gates of Jerusalem, the most interesting is the Damascus Gate. There are some very remarkable things connected with

From a Photograph.

THE DAMASCUS GATE.





it. As you are about to pass out, you see on your right, immediately adjoining the gate, an immense stone of a circular form in the wall. This is supposed to be the lintel or arch-stone of the gate of the Herodian age.

'It is possible that this may be the very arch-stone beneath which our Lord passed out on His way to the cross. The wall here is formed of great massive stones, and on either side of the gate is to be seen a Roman guard-house, the same, it may be, to which the soldier ran who wanted to fill a sponge with vinegar and present it to the sufferer on the cross.'

Thus far have we quoted from Dr. Wylie's most interesting book, *Over the Holy Land*, and these sentences give at once a meaning and a value to our illustration, which is a photogravure of the Damascus Gate.

About three minutes' walk would take us from it to the site which General Gordon and many others think is the true Calvary, the 'Skull-hill.' As we write, we are looking on a photograph of this very spot, sent by a friend who, coming fresh from the scene, has helped us much to understand the picture. Fain would we transport ourselves

thither ; but as we may not, we look first on the picture, then on the Bible page, while we fill in the scene with solemn and adoring love.

About twelve years ago a friend described to us how, after the German campaign, he spent his holiday wandering over the battlefields. We meet to-day on a battlefield where love has conquered. As we wander over it, the very soil seems to breathe out perfume. It is not a breath of perfume as when the summer's wind has in our walk blown over a bush of sweetbriar, and betrayed its presence, for here the very weeds are flowers, and smell of *Love*. It is not one monument set up to a hero fallen in the fight, for every stone is a monument, and on each is written *Love*. We hear the words ringing in our ears, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' We hear the Son repeat, 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' It is a battlefield where love has conquered, and conquered when thought to be defeated. For love and suffering are strangely mingled, suffering proving love, love causing suffering. We can only say, '*It became Him*, for whom are all things,

and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'

In our daily life it is a daily enigma, love imposing suffering, unless we come to Calvary and see love made perfect, a Father bending over His Son, the Son yielding Himself, until, in the height of suffering, that heart broke. Here love bled itself to death, love breathed itself out only to live again. As here we live at first, so here, beside the bruised body of the Son of God, the army of mourners and sufferers now get their commission : 'Unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.' Here also the fruits of the Spirit ripen, for the fruit of the Spirit is love. Here Faith gets her motive-power, for Faith worketh by love. Poets, artists, historians, all write and dream and paint about love, down to the child in the nursery, who lavishes its little being on the wooden plaything which it fancies returns that love. But love finds its true measure at Calvary.

The greatest Lover has left us this command, 'That as I have loved you, ye also love one another.' One day we opened a drawer, and a small phial of

otto of roses betrayed its presence by the odour which came forth. So let us sweeten lives around us.

Augustine says, 'A man lives where he loves.' So let us pray, as we sit in thought near this gateway, that we may never leave it without an alabaster box to break on some needy head. Bengel says, 'He who loves has a smooth journey.' So will our lives be smooth. So shall we betray where we have been when to speak were impossible.

Here are some lines which helped us a year ago, from a little biography of one whose life was love, who lived on 'tiptoe for the skies.' 'Religion is its own end, and love exists for love. And love is better than consistency, better than good sense, better than good taste, better than moderation, better than wisdom. All these are noble gifts; they are all the gifts of love. But love is better than all the gifts of love.' And we have known another whose life was like this, born of love; who, like the scent, betrayed where he came from, when in a birthday-book under his name, instead of a text, he wrote the one word 'nigh.'

In our small measure let us seek to imitate such *lives*. *Rohese*, mother of Thomas à Becket, used

to weigh her boy each year on his birthday, against money, clothes, and provisions, which she gave to the poor. Over against the Father's gift to us, our being, all our gifts, would not move the scale; but in every dealing with our fellows surely we shall throw in an extra handful of love to turn the balance.

In presence of this perfect love at Calvary, we look forward to the time when we shall be perfect too, when all earth's melodies will be sung in tune, all the perfumes will be satisfying, all the pictures of love perfected. In one of Dr. Candlish's sermons he draws a picture of what it will be when the great family worship begins up yonder, and we first really say 'Our Father.' We too picture it to ourselves now. A fitting melody for the praise would be David's little psalm, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' Paul's chapter would be understood then which ends by telling us that 'the greatest of these is charity.' As for prayer, there will be none, but we shall fall prostrate before the throne of the Lamb, and in overwhelming adoration breathe ourselves out in rapture at His feet as we cry, 'Who loved me and gave Himself for me.'

CHAPTER III.

The Door of the Sepulchre.

‘This was the Bethel, where, on stony bed,
While angels went and came from morn till even,
Our truer Jacob laid His wearied head ;
This was to Him the very gate of heaven.

‘Yes ; death’s last hope, his strongest fort and prison,
Is shattered, never to be built again ;
And He, the mighty captive, He is risen,
Leaving behind the gate, the bar, the chain.’

‘And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.’—MATT. xxvii. 59,60.

‘Behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.’—MATT. xxviii. 2.

JESUS rose before the dawn. As in Eden the Creator, the Lord God, made morning, so *now the Eternal Son creates in this very act*

a better morning for His children, The women waited

‘Till morn,
Waked by the circling hours, with rosy hand
Unbarr’d the gates of light :’

for we read ‘they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.’ But He had already risen. He had fulfilled the command in Exodus, ‘None of you shall go out of his house until the morning.’ The morning has come, the first real morning, a morning without clouds. In our last chapter His suffering had seemed indeed to these women a sunset-scene. Their sun had set; they thought it had gone down in chill and darkness. But little did they dream of such a sunrise: such soft, sweet, silvery streaks of dawn: such rosy rays, such golden glory, eclipsing all sunrises before and since; ‘A light that never was on sea or land,’ from which all other mornings borrow rays till time shall be no more.

Joseph had rolled the stone to the door, but it needs an angel’s strength to roll it back, and he sits upon it as if to crush beneath him what had imprisoned his Master, while the rending earth expresses nature’s joy. We quote these lines from

the journal of Rev. James Wells, *Through Bible Lands*, which help us to understand what these sepulchres and their doors really were:

‘Captain Sylvester took us into a private garden, and showed us the recently discovered rock-tomb of a rich man. In such a sepulchre, “hewn in stone,” and “in a garden,” was the body of Jesus laid by Joseph of Arimathæa.

‘The door of the sepulchre is a large circular stone, for which a groove has been hewn at the side, just as in a sliding door. The stone is rolled backwards or forwards, for opening and shutting the door. We ask the man to roll the stone backward and open the door, but it could not be done without a crowbar, he says. The groove slopes towards the door so that it is easy to shut but hard to open it. A path is hewn through the rock, so that a man can get into the groove behind the stone when he wishes to roll it to the door.’

‘Watch on the tower, and listen by the gateway,
Nor weep to wait alone ;
Take thou thy spices, and some angel straightway
Shall roll away the stone.’

This verse tells us how we should still be in the

attitude of these women, watching and waiting with the spices ready ; and after this door has been opened, after the Lord is risen, what may we not expect to see ? Let us bury all doubt in His sepulchre. And while we go between this garden-grave and the mount called Olivet, where His blessed feet last rested, and where they are again to stand, the voice of the Church militant bids us look higher still as it sings,—

‘Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious,
Ascended up on high,
And in triumph victorious led
Captive captivity.

‘Thou hast received gifts for men,
For such as did rebel ;
Yea, ev’n for them, that God the Lord
In midst of them might dwell.’

And when we are thus lifting up our eyes, and straining to see the everlasting Gates which received the King of Glory, this melody comes from the Church triumphant and the heavenly choir, in anticipation of the glad home-coming, when He shall go forth and return not alone but through triumphal arches with His Bride :—

'A song breaks out like one unsung for years :
"Lift up, ye gates, lift up your heads on high !
Be lifted up, doors of eternity !
The King of glory cometh in thereby."
Thus far the billows of great song did flow,
Then ebbing backward they began to go :
"Who is the King of glory ?" Then a hush.
The old wave of song came onward with a rush :
"Jehovah, strong and hero, battle-hero He !"
So the high strain took heart and hurled in glee,
The old acclamation surging like a sea :
"Lift up, ye gates, lift up your heads on high !
Be lifted up, doors of eternity !
The King of glory cometh in thereby."



CHAPTER IV.
—o—**D**oors Shut.

'When the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.'

'And after eight days, again His disciples were within: . . . then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.'—JOHN xx. 19, 26.

AS His lightning dart, as His sunshine ray, did the risen Jesus glide in to comfort the hearts of His children. Through unopened doors, He stole in to the palpitating hearts behind them. He was to be, better than the poor doors could be, a wall of strength between them and their enemies. The vision was twice repeated, like a 'Verily, verily.' In John xiv. he had already bequeathed His legacy, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.' But here is a second leave-taking. We remember taking leave of a

friend at a station, when, as the train was starting, he came in, and, instead of saying good-bye, said he was coming as a surprise half the journey with us to the junction. So Jesus came again, in His resurrection body, at the meeting of the ways where their life-mission began and His life-work ended, and breathed on them, and said 'Peace.' If it had not been for these closed doors, we might never have had such a vista up and down these paths of Christ and His followers.

But there is something more than a simple leave-taking. A bride was going far over the seas, and a kind friend prepared some lines, a poem of love. Outside, on the white embossed cardboard, she fastened a deep purple heart's-ease and a spray of orange-blossom. The lines became more precious at each bound the steamer took from home. The heavenly Lover saw this little company, like a frail bark going out upon earth's stormy sea. He gave them a letter, outside was the flower 'forget-me-not,' and inside the word was 'Peace,' and in their writings afterwar'ds we see how they loved their Master's farewell word.

'Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown,
Jesus I know, and He is on the throne.

We cannot linger on the texts about peace, but they are everywhere, as tufts of heather in a Highland bog, to help us over the often insecure foot-hold in our journey down below. But here is one from David too sweet to be passed over, 'Who maketh thy border peace.' Take any border you like of pink and white daisies in your garden, which you would not have a stranger foot to tread on, or of shining pebble-stones beside the garden walk, and think of His offering to put such a lovely thing round your life : 'Who maketh thy border peace.'

Let us secure a lodging where Christian lay. 'The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun-rising : the name of the chamber was Peace, where he slept till break of day, and then he awoke and sang,—

"Where am I now? Is this the love and care
Of Jesus for the men that pilgrims are
Thus to provide? That I should be forgiven,
And dwell already the next door to heaven!"'

CHAPTER V.

A Little Doorkeeper.

‘For in thy courts one day excels
A thousand ; rather in
My God’s house will I keep a door,
Than dwell in tents of sin.’

‘And Samuel opened the doors of the house of the Lord.’
—I SAM. iii. 15.

H E who anointed kings, he who had visions of the Lord, he who founded a school of the prophets, began his ministry as a little door-keeper. Your nursery picture-book is well worn at the pages about little Samuel, for your favourite story is there. The older children also know well the chapter in God’s picture-book that begins, ‘The child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli.’ You are not now called to temple-service ; but in *the temple of your own home* the Lord as really

now as then has need of your little hands and feet. Some day He may call you to great work needing great strength, like what boys envy when they see the picture of Samson carrying away the gates of Gaza, but the preparation for this is in being helpers at home. A little child tending her sick mother once got the name of Mrs. Help. This service is described by Paul in one of his lists of gifts as 'helps.' We remember the bright eyes gleaming out of the olive face of a little page-boy at the hotel at San Remo, who, when asked to do any message, seemed as if he had already started on it or gone half way before we had finished speaking, so anxious was he to help. Such we would have you to be.

Little did the child sleeper think that night in Shiloh, when he laid him down to rest, Who would come and stand beside his bed before the morning. But he was so accustomed to a life of ministry that he does not seem to have been much taken by surprise by a midnight call. 'He ran unto Eli.' Some who read this have already heard the Lord's call. To some it may also come in the night-watches by the remembrance of a sermon, or the death of a loved one, and when you run for help

the answer will be like Eli's, 'If He call thee, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' Having answered the call, and accepted the revelation for himself, 'the word of Samuel came to all Israel.' We have no room here to write all the wonderful history of the little doorkeeper. But surely David had caught from him his inspiration when he said, 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness ;' and in Chronicles we read of the two hundred and twelve porters in the gates of the house of the Lord. 'These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord.'

In the house of God still, though not in a literal way, the church wants doorkeepers, gate-keepers. 'God loveth the gates of Zion,' and we love them too. A child was once a doorkeeper in a town house, where her parents had come unexpectedly for the night, and answered the bell when the servant was out. With great confidence, when she opened the door to a policeman who was inquiring who was there, as he had not had notice

of the house being occupied, could she say, 'My father is here.' So we watch the doors of our church because it is God's house, the type of our Father's house on high. And as we read in its history how men and women have died for its principles, we long to have you found faithful like them.

Some have died at their post of doorkeepers. The salvation of the wealthy little city of Bois-le-Duc, history tells us, was accomplished by a gatekeeper thus: 'The city had been really taken, and taken by an insignificant number. The whole place was in confusion, the night-watch had been massacred, except one wounded gatekeeper, a poor crippled old man, who unnoticed had crept into a corner to die. In the strange pell-mell and confusion, those who had obtained possession of the city crossed the portcullis gate, expecting, however, to return instantly and sack and ravage the town. As they passed, the poor wounded old gatekeeper crept forth from his shadowed concealment, cut the ropes which held the portcullis with his pocket-knife, then crept back and died. . . . The hero of the day, the chief agent in the victory, was the poor, crushed, nameless victim

who had cut the ropes of the portcullis of the Antwerp gate.'

And nearer home, you have read in Scottish story how Catherine Douglas, to save her royal master, James I., put her arm into the empty staple of a door from which traitors had removed the bolt. If these had such enthusiasm for an earthly city and an earthly king, shall we have less for our heavenly King in the short day of service here? Soon we shall be where there are no gatekeepers and no doorkeepers required, for we read, 'The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day : for there shall be no night there.'

'My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near !
At times to faith's foreseeing eye
Thy golden gates appear.'



CHAPTER VI.

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Redemption at the Gate.

‘Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there.’

—RUTH iv. I.

‘The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel.’—RUTH iv. II.

WE remember when we were children how anxiously we waited at a diorama for the closing scene, and wondered if the effects of shifting light or darkness, of figures moving or still, would come up to the programme’s description. The last scene was always the best. Could the curtain fall over the little book of Ruth with a more lovely scene for a mother’s heart? Look in at the door of this model home in Bethlehem, where the neighbours are rejoicing, where Boaz is the head, Ruth the loving mother, and Naomi the

tender, sagacious nurse, with the little Obed in her bosom.

We have to retrace our steps to the city gate for the foundation of this home. There we see Boaz and the kinsman of nearer blood whom he has called to his side standing beside him. Soon the ten elders, no doubt men who have already made themselves known in the gate, sit down as witnesses. We do not add our words to the graphic picture, but all is done as the Levitical law required. We like the words, ‘the manner in former time in Israel,’ the ‘testimony in Israel,’ referring to the command in Deuteronomy for any time of perplexity, ‘Go up to the gate unto the elders,’ where the loosed shoe was the token or sign of the agreement made.

It casts a side light on this loosing of the shoe to know that it is still done in our western islands. ‘In the outer Hebrides, when a crofter has been elected constable, he takes off his shoes and stockings, and taking his bonnet in his hand, and, bowing low and reverently, he declares on honour, in presence of earth and heaven, in presence of God and men, that he shall be faithful to his trust. The feet are bared in order to bring the man into

contact with the earth, of which he is made and to which he returns.'

It was a solemn moment when Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, 'Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's. . . . Moreover, Ruth . . . have I purchased to be my wife . . . that the name of the dead . . . be not cut off from the gate of this place.' We would like to have known more of how this sweet mother builded her house; but when as a widow already she was 'known in the gate as a virtuous woman,' there is little doubt that afterwards in her own home she enjoyed the fruit of her hands, and her own works praised her in the gates. Most of all had she the right to give thanks in the gate as she carried her little Obed to the well his grandson loved and longed to drink of. This we are sure of, that she never forgot that day at the gate when she was bought back.

In the answer of the elders to Boaz there is a word for mothers of all time. 'The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel.' For we are builders; our work never ceases, and, unlike a building, never



comes to an end until the Master-builder takes a block for finer workmanship above. We are builders, and have to keep our eye on high. A child was taken by a master-mason to a high scaffolding of a new house to get a view that would be impossible again, because slates would take the place of the workman's planks. In case of giddiness his word was always, 'Keep looking up.'

We are builders, and our buildings have gates, and our help is sure, for the Lord supplements as He inspects us. David, in one of his closing psalms in his little praise-book within the psalm book, gives us encouragement. He has been ransacking nature for tongues to praise God's goodness. He has spoken of the stars, the clouds, and the wild beasts, and in his flight he gives Jerusalem and Zion a word which in a narrow and limited sense we mothers can claim, for we are working at the same building. 'He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.'

We are builders, and a noble army of mothers beckon us on. Cornelia, the mother of twelve children, refused Ptolemy's crown after she became a widow, that she might devote herself to the

training of her sons ; and this was the inscription the Romans put on her statue, ‘Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi.’ And nearer home our own Princess Alice might be called the model and martyr of motherhood. She writes thus : ‘I always think that in the end children educate the parents. For their sakes there is so much one must do ; one must forget oneself if everything is as it ought to be. It is doubly so if one has the misfortune to lose a precious child. Rückert’s lovely lines are so true (after the loss of two of his children) :

“Nun hat euch Gott verlieh’n, was wir euch wollten thun,
Wir wollten euch erzieh’n, und ihr erzieht uns nun.
O Kinder, ihr erziehet mit Schmerz die Eltern jetzt ;
Ihr zieht an uns, und ziehet uns auf zu euch zuletzt.”¹

Yes, we are builders, and often unconsciously the children left on earth help us on also. Amid weary days of discouragement, of felt weakness and failure, of lonely building, streaks of light

¹ “ Now unto you the Lord has done what we had wished to do ;
We would have trained you up, and now ’tis we are trained
by you.
With grief and tears, O children, do you your parents train,
And lure us on and up to you, to meet in heaven again. ”

come to show we have their confidence and sympathy. ‘Two little voices were heard early one morning in a nursery,’ writes a mother; ‘the younger brother was saying to an older one, who was lying sick when the mother’s bell was heard, “Now’s the time to ask for whatever you want, for mother is just lying thinking what she can send you.”’ Or it may be on birthdays, the gateways into a new year, perhaps a first birthday when the next in age wonders why so many gifts come to the infant who has no birthday yet but one. Or it may be on Sabbaths that their love comes out, as they, when helping you in study, are unconsciously learning themselves.

We are builders, and very many of our homes can never be complete on earth, for one stone, if not more, has been removed; but the little one is already a polished stone in the Heavenly Temple, and as you strain your eyes the gate comes nearer, till

‘The crystal bars shine faint between
The soul of child and mother.’

CHAPTER VII.

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Thy Stranger within thy Gates.

'There no stranger God shall meet thee,
Stranger thou in courts above ;
He who to His rest shall greet thee,
Greets thee with a well-known love.'

'Thou shalt not do any work, thou . . . nor thy stranger
that is within thy gates.'—Ex. xx. 10.

IN the heart of the Decalogue this command shines like a star. A very tender light comes from it as it calls the stranger as well as the family to rest, to Sabbath-keeping. We have been much struck in studying the word 'stranger' all through the Bible, and have sometimes thought the subject quite worthy of a book to itself. It would be out of place to notice any of the passages here except those which bear upon gates, but we commend this subject as a delightful and rewarding study for the young.

We can hardly imagine the surprise of the

stranger admitted into the Sabbath-keeping of the Jewish home, with all the details of tabernacle worship. Still more when he heard the children taught, or when he looked up and saw the law written on the posts of the house and on the gates. But more than all must he have been impressed by Jehovah's care that he should not feel a stranger any more. When the harvest was cut down, the sheaf was not to be fetched again, 'It shall be for the stranger;' when the olive tree was beaten, 'Thou shalt not go over the boughs again : it shall be for the stranger;' when the grapes of the vineyard were gleaned, 'It shall be for the stranger.' At the end of three years, when the tithe of increase was brought forth and laid up within the gates of the godly Israelite, this was the command : 'The stranger . . . within thy gates shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied.'

Very often where the word 'gates' occurs, we find 'stranger' too. When the basket of first-fruits was brought to the priest, the order ran : 'Thou shalt rejoice, thou and the stranger.'

Have you ever felt literally a stranger in a strange land? It was six o'clock on an evening early in September, when an anchor dropped in Ponta

Delgada. The line of volcanic mountains looks down on a busy scene ere yet the sun has set. The lava breakwater claims kindred with the rugged mountain-sides, and the pink and white houses on shore are brighter than an artist would dare to paint. News comes that the only English hotel is full, because an American steamer has arrived before us. The clamorous foreign boatmen had friends and homes, we had none. We were strangers with no home.

Next forenoon we walked on the island, no more strangers but friends. The change came thus: from the tropical heat and burning street-stones and importunate beggars we found refreshment in the house of a gentleman to whom a friend had given us an introduction, and who fulfilled to us the words, 'A stranger, and ye took me in.' Living alone with his five dogs and the faithful servants, he welcomed us in broken English, and led us himself into the unused drawing-room, the kitchen with its wood fire, and another room adorned with crucifixes. We have never forgotten the lesson learned that day. That was stranger-love in a human heart. What is it in the Divine bosom?

One mention of the word we cannot omit; it seems as if Jesus Himself had glorified the term. The gospel words are so rich that we must not add to them.

'One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus, answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, **SAVE THIS STRANGER.**' The Samaritan outran the Jew; the stranger was the first to thank the Saviour, and now he is where the word is lost, because heaven's vocabulary possesses it not.

'See, forth from the gates, like a bridal array,
Come the princes of heaven, how bravely they shine!
'Tis to welcome the stranger, to show me the way,
And to tell me that all I see round me is mine.'



CHAPTER VIII.

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Life at the Gate.

'Here before every mortal,
There lies the gloomy portal,
DEATH waves his icy sceptre, and the chilling shadow falls.
But there, through Gateway glorious,
We enter shall victorious,
Upon the LIFE eternal, within the jasper walls.'

'The day after, He went into a city called Nain. Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out.'—LUKE vii. 12.

WHEN we first saw the lovely Stresa on Lago Maggiore, its beauty to us lay most in our knowing that a dear friend now gone home had been there and written lines of love from it. The lake was coloured to us not by the sun's reflections, but by the memory of that friend,—she had been there. Thus strangely through a view, a melody,

a perfume, a whole scene rises up before us. Jesus was at the gate of Nain, and it cannot be again a common name to us. It matters not that we are told that the city is only mentioned this once in the New Testament, and never in the Old. It matters not that travellers say its only antiquities are tombs. The lovely situation, as from its nest on the hill-side it looks out on a scene of beauty, and the lovely name (Nain means beauty or pleasantness), remain ; and, above all, it preserves the footprints of the Prince of Life, the abolisher of death.

We have never forgotten a children's sermon which we heard about eleven years ago on this passage. It has been to us as a pressed autumn leaf in memory's portfolio, losing nothing by the lapse of years. We cannot resist recalling here notes of the striking words, which better than we can do bring the scene before us. The divisions were :

- I. An event that happened eighteen hundred years ago.
- II. An event that may happen here to-day.
- III. An event that will happen at some future time.

'But first,' said the preacher, 'we must say a word about death, because we must all die unless Christ come. How sad the circumstances of this death! This poor woman had been first a girl, then a wife and mother, and now a widow who has lost her only child. Two processions meet one another. One joyful; they are full of the miracle of the day before: the other sorrowful. Which is to be victorious, life or death? Christ touched the bier, and death died, and sorrow died, and life revived.'

Another thought which has been helpful to us is that the three raisings by Christ showed three stages of death. One was newly dead, a little girl, whom he took by the hand when he said to her, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.' The second was a young man longer dead, and borne on the way to burial. His bier He only touched. The third was older still, and for a still longer time dead. His sisters already regarded him as the prey of corruption, and to him Jesus called from the mouth of his grave.

'There came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up amongst us.' No wonder that the crowd now

take up the song of Zacharias, 'God hath visited His people.'

Just lately a mourner said, bending over his dead, 'Why cannot our dead still be raised?' As we look round on the unused garments, or the fragile hothouse flowers sent off by the desire of a sufferer only to be opened after she was dead, and to remain still lovely when she was beginning to see corruption, our dead seem near and yet so far away. The Prince of Life made that poor widow feel how small the space was that parted them, the living and the dead, for this youth seems at once to have felt the vigour of life. 'He that was dead sat up and began to speak.' We know not what he said, but it might have been David's song: 'Thou liftest me up from the gates of death, that I may show forth all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in Thy salvation.'

And the Lord Jesus shows His tenderness to sufferers still, if not in bringing them back from the grave, in the way in which He opens for them the gateway into the other world. One of His children had been seeing the beauties of the Scottish capital. She was seized with sudden illness, and *an operation was fixed for the next day at noon.*

But the loving Father would not cause His child needless pain. As nature was covering the earth with a fair mantle of snow during the night, He spread the skirts of His garment of deep sleep over the tired body, and when the surgeons came their task was unneeded. The iron gate of the city opened to her of its own accord.

‘At the gate
Of heaven arrived, the gate self-opened wide,
On golden hinges turning.’



CHAPTER IX.

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The Gate of Heaven.

'O safe and happy shelter, O refuge tried and sweet,
O trysting-place where heaven's love and heaven's justice
meet !

As to the holy patriarch that wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Saviour's cross to me a ladder up to heaven.

Upon that cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One who suffered there for me ;
And from my smitten heart with tears two wonders I
confess—

The wonders of His glorious love, and my own worthless-
ness.'

'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the
gate of heaven.'—GEN. xxviii. 17.

O FTEN we read in history that dreams have moulded the lives of great men of old. 'The whole temper of the man was painted in a dream of his youth,' writes the historian about

Anselm, and he thus describes his dream: 'It seemed to him as though heaven lay, a stately palace amid the gleaming hill-peaks, while the women reaping in the corn-fields of the valley became harvest-maidens of its heavenly King. They reaped idly, and Anselm, grieved at their sloth, hastily climbed the mountain-side to accuse them to their Lord. As he reached the palace, the King's voice called him to His feet, and he poured forth his tale; then at the royal bidding bread of an unearthly whiteness was set before him, and he ate and was refreshed. The dream passed with the morning, but the sense of heaven's nearness to earth became the life of Anselm.'

It was thus in an earlier age with the patriarch Jacob. We have not to wait until we read our Bibles on to Revelation, but here at the very beginning we seem to have the Apocalypse in miniature. We may well linger in this place, for this chapter is the birthplace of the hymn we teach first to our children—

'O God of Bethel ! by whose hand
Thy people still are fed ;
—Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led.'

And this they carry with them ever afterwards,
to find their life woven into its folds, suited alike for
wedding song or mourning hymn.

David has been here before us to gather the
chief flower to adorn the wreath of his 23rd Psalm :

‘ Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me ;
And in “ God’s house ” for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be.’

Let us linger on such classic ground. What is the chief object in the picture? A homeless wanderer, with no bed of down, no luxurious chamber at nightfall, no inn to refuse him admittance because too full. The bare ground is his bed, a stone his pillow. But what a background! visions of God—a beatific vision. For surely in the ladder set up he saw what Nathanael saw, by the eye of sense, centuries after, heaven brought near to earth—the chasm bridged in the person of the Son of Man.

‘ He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.’ The spot must get a new name, even though the old be not forgotten. And how often has it been

in the lonely, friendless tracks of our journey, that our Gate of Heaven has been seen and realized.

'Behold, a door was opened in heaven.' 'It was when my lovely baby left me that this verse came to me, and my door in heaven was opened,' writes a mother whose life has been changed since then. But it need not be always by sorrow's light that we see the gate. In the brightest days of youth you may have your ladder set up in the person of the Crucified, who says, 'I am the way,' 'I am the door.' You may have now the earnest of heaven before you finish this chapter. At this gate of heaven where we have met we anticipate the glad morning that is coming when we shall awaken from life's dream to find heaven the reality. And to very many of us it already means home. This is the home the thought of which will hush all the discords of earth.

One night on the banks of the Potomac, as the Confederate and the Union troops lay opposite each other, the Union bands played *The Star-Spangled Banner*, *Hail Columbia*, and other Union songs, and the Confederates in contest played *Dixie*, *The Bonnie Blue Flag*, and other pieces in which they so much rejoiced. It seemed for a

while that each would play the other down. By and by one band struck up *Home, Sweet Home*. The conflict ceased ; the bands on the other side struck up *Home, Sweet Home*, and the vast multitudes on both sides of the river took up the words, and sang in unison, 'There is no place like home.'

'O spread thy cov'ring wings around,
Till all our wand'rings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace.'



CHAPTER X.

Noah's Door.

“And the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof.”
—GEN. vi. 16.

WHEN we heard that a little boy had set off with *Wells of Water* as his chosen book when kept from church one Sunday in the country, we felt that in this little book the children must have more than one chapter for themselves.

Besides the pictures of it in your Sunday story books, besides your mother’s stories left on your little heart like a transfer picture, there is lying in most of your homes a Noah’s ark. Perhaps the little ones still play with the painted or unpainted animals, and make them walk in a procession. Perhaps there are only some stray broken beasts left in your toy-basket. One thing these toy arks

always lack, and that is a door. The lines of paint on the sliding lid are different from the door of Noah's ark. Have you thought of the time when there was no door, no ark except in God's plan? You may have seen an architect lay down his roll of plans, his measure, and his pencil on the smooth table, and show you what your new home would be like, as he said, pointing to the lines on the plan, 'A door here, a passage or a wall there.' So God was at great trouble to give Noah all the details, which he carefully followed. And as a house stands at length on the bare green, so the ark floated on the great waters.

And God Himself kept the door of this ark, and shut Noah in.

Here is a prayer for you about a door that you all have, thus described in poetry,—

'Her lips, like coral gates, kept in
The perfume and the pearl within.'

This is a very difficult door to keep, so difficult that David says you must call in the strong One to help you. The prayer is, 'Keep Thou the door of my lips.'

We who are older find it so difficult that we

would like you all to begin early. Come with me to the third chapter of James, which is just like a picture-book, or rather one large cloth panoramic picture which we can fold up, leaving one picture out at a time. It is all about the troublesome inmate behind this door. Those of you who love horses will find them here. Those of you who will hardly be dragged away from the sea-shore find ships here. Those of you who like beasts, birds, serpents, fishes, or who like to wander among fruit-trees or by fountains of waters, may all come to the chapter and find your favourites. The sad thing is that the horses can be trained, the ships turned, the animals tamed, and the fountains and fruit-trees are seen to follow nature's laws. But in contrast to all these, James tells us there is something that is untameable. You must find out yourself what it is, and begin to pray David's prayer, 'Keep Thou the door of my lips ;' for sin lies close to that door, and is ready to come out in some hasty sinful word before you are aware.

In Grecian history we read how the Athenians erected to Leæna's memory a bronze statue of a lioness without a tongue. She was put to the torture, but would not give the name of her lover,

one of the conspirators who had helped to slay Hipparchus. Some say she went the length of biting out her tongue lest she should disclose anything. Let us learn from her, and feel that we would rather bite out our tongue than say an unkind, untrue word, which can never be recalled. Better still, let us have this prayer ever rising in our heart and to our lips,—

'Set, Lord, a watch before my mouth,
Keep of my lips the door ;
My heart incline Thou not unto
The ills I should abhor.'



CHAPTER XI.

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Door-Posts.

‘And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, . . . and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.’—Ex. xii. 7, 13.

‘And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master . . . I will not go out free: then his master shall bring . . . him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.’—Ex. xxi. 5, 6.

‘And the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.’—ISA. vi. 4.

THESE are the days of unleavened bread, of which they have an enormous supply, and which they are dividing. We taste it, and also their “bitter herbs,” and very bitter they are.

Every table has a comely white cloth on it, and the dishes are all ready for the feast. A piece of paper, on which are written verses of Scripture, is nailed on the door-post ; they touch it, and kiss one of their fingers as they enter.' We take these lines from the journal of a friend who was among the Jews at their last passover time. Let us imitate their example, and go to-day and read from the door-posts of Scripture. What do we find at them? Covenant—Consecration—Communion.

Have we yet been to the fountain? Has our heart been sprinkled with the blood? Is our home sheltered with the scarlet line? This is the starting point—at Calvary. The Covenant is signed. The avenging angel has seen the blood and passed over.

The next longing that the redeemed soul has is for full Consecration. Here are the words which come welling up from the pardoned soul,—

' I love, I love my Master,
I will not go out free !
For He is my Redeemer ;
He paid the price for me.

' I would not leave His service,
It is so sweet and blest ;
And in the weariest moments
He gives the truest rest.

' For He has met my longing
With words of golden tone,
That I " shall serve for ever "
Himself, Himself alone.'

Still at the door-post He engages you to be His servant for ever. As we write these lines we remember the rustic post of a Highland gate where a strong young workman, who knew well what it was to be trusted by an earthly master, said, 'I will not go out free,' and engaged himself to be the Lord's. But it was as a doorkeeper in the heavenly temple that his service was to be, though then we knew it not.

'One cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is full of His glory.' This was the cry of the seraphim, and as, when Jesus died, earth could not be silent, but shook and trembled and burst open its graves, so here the very door-posts of the temple shook, and the house was filled with smoke. God has

need of Isaiahs now. It is in the time of Communion with the Lord, 'high and lifted up,' the servant crying out, 'Woe is me!' the very doors shaking because of the glory, that the anointing for highest service comes. When once this anointing has been received, the believer soon finds that it is in the temple of the closet he must have it daily renewed. 'When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray.' When the prophet would raise the widow's son to life, when he would fill her vessels with oil, we notice that first the door had to be shut. So it is still, that when quietly alone waiting before the Lord we receive provision at once for ourselves and others. We live in poverty, because we do not believe that we are heirs to such fortune. As we allot money for a pile of accounts, and it lies awaiting transmission, so a pile of promises lies for some of us, allotted, not appropriated.

It is in the secret of the closet that the roots of our soul take firm hold. When we were children, we read in the seedsman's paper of directions for our hyacinth-roots which we bought for our coloured glasses, that they must be *kept six weeks in the dark till the roots would*

grow. But in our impatience during the long six weeks we would go into the large dark press to see what progress had been made. The Master keeps to Himself alone the right to unlock our closet door, but the bloom and fragrance will show the world if the roots are deep. He teaches us much in the secret of His pavilion, and it is here the dew of His Spirit falls, the sunshine of His presence illumines, and the calm of His peace dwells. In the sun's light we choose a colour for our embroidery and are satisfied with our purchase, but at night the artificial light makes it look quite different. With a new morning all is right. So true guidance comes when we see things in His light, not ours. We have all lost much by having so little time alone with God. To busy lives the knock comes too soon at the closet door. To comfort such we give the following story entire from Mr. Taylor Innes' lecture in the second volume of *The Evangelical Succession*, which has been, since we read it, an often visited portrait in memory's gallery.

'It was evening in the convent, and one brother still knelt in his cell. Day after day, with fasting and prayer, he had waited—hour after hour of this

day he has waited and watched, to see, in some transcendent manifestation, a vision of Christ. And now, at last, a light, a form, a face ! it is the Lord Himself ! But at that moment comes sharp and clear the convent bell,—the bell that calls the poor and hungry to be fed at the convent door, and calls him, the servitor appointed for that task, to dispense the dole. Shall he go, or stay ? Slowly, sadly, but with unreverted face, he leaves his room ; and not till his whole work is done, not till the last feeble and querulous and thankless applicant has been served as often as he seems to need, not till then does he set his feet to return. But at last with slow feet and sinking heart he does return to his desolate room, and as those feet touch the threshold, lo ! again the gleam, the glory, the Vision ! And as he prostrates himself in adoring gratitude, this voice comes to him, “ Because thou wentest, I stayed. Hadst thou stayed, I should have departed ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

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The Chamber over the Gate.

‘ Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent !
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel Thy heaven too distant.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
Has ruffled all our vesture :
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture.’

‘ And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept ; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son !’—2 SAM. xviii. 33.

WE are living in days of discovery. We read lately that a missionary is about to start for the interior of Africa, who takes with him a phonograph wherewith to fix the speech and

melodies of hitherto unknown tribes. The plates taken in Africa will be sent to Berlin and placed in another machine, which will reproduce the sounds received.

If we transport ourselves to this chamber over the gate, the verse becomes the phonograph which, as we unroll it, emits the sounds. What had happened to bow down this strong frame, to make the strong heart break, to give those measured steps, which recall to our mind the ascent of Olivet, when this same figure went up, the centre of a procession of weepers, head-covered and barefoot? Then he was fleeing from this very son over whom he is mourning now. The ascent is more difficult still as he seeks to flee from the great grief which yet keeps even pace with him.

We have not space to go back on the sad story, but without leaving our gates they seem to tell us what has happened. It was at the Gate-side, to the people assembling by hundreds and thousands, that the command went forth, at once a royal mandate and a father's word of love, 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with *Absalom*.'

It was sitting between the two gates that David waited to see if the command had been obeyed; and we read that 'the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall,' to get the best point of view to watch for the runners with the tidings. But now the tidings have been told; Cushi's words are true, and the chamber shuts its door on the aged weeper. 'The victory that day was turned into mourning.' There David remains till the bitter complaint of his commander-in-chief again forces him to take his seat in the gate.

It is in visiting scenes like the one which happened in this chamber over the gate that Sorrow's children still get sympathy and strength. And for us too, as surely as there was for this chief mourner, a door will be opened from the chamber of earth towards the palace of the King, thus fulfilling the word, 'The Valley of Achor shall be for a door of hope.' And as in the earthly temple, cherubims, palm trees, and open flowers were carved over the doors of olive wood and the whole overlaid with gold, so will it be with our doors of sorrow.

We know a house where the porch and door always faced the north, where no sun ever came to

chase the dulness, where not many flowers grew upon the walls. But a day came when, a large addition being built, the entrance was moved to a southern exposure, and was so situated as to receive in sunshine all day long its visitors. On the free-stone archway travellers can read the words, 'Ut migraturus habita.' (Dwell like a bird of passage.) So to many the Man of sorrows has made the gateway in the chamber of sorrow to face the south instead of the north, and taught the dwellers that through sorrow the aspect of their life has been changed, so that they live no longer in darkness but in light, while gladly they say to one another, 'Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.'

'There is no death ! What seems so is transition ;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call death.'

CHAPTER XIII.



Crossing the Threshold.

'The Angel of the Lord stood by,—
Watching, methought, to see what I would think
Of this his blessed Home. He took my hand
And pointed to the city,—“Beautiful
For situation, joy of all the earth,
Is God's fair Zion ! Thou shalt rise and come
(Even with joy) within this dreaded gate
Of Tirzah ; for what time thy weary feet
Do pass across this city-gate, the child
Shall cross that threshold, and behold the face
Of God in peace.”'

'And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah : and when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died.'—I KINGS xiv. 17.

THE tender heart of a father lay under King Jeroboam's robes, and he was anxious as to the issue of his child's illness. The mother's quick step and busy hands put into execution the father's plan. We soon see her with her present of ten loaves, cracknels, and honey at the door of the aged

prophet Ahijah at Shiloh to inquire about her son. But her attempt at deception was in vain. The Lord's words to his blind servant stripped her of all disguises, so that the crossing of the threshold of the prophet's door was only second in the terror of dismay to the return through the gate of her own city as the words fell on her ears : 'Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam ; why feignest thou thyself to be another. For I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. . . . When thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.'

'It is but a clumsy way we have of dividing time by the revolution of the clock into minutes, days, and years, as if each portion so measured were of the same size as another of equal length.' So surely would that sore heart feel as she prepared to wend her homeward way! The ending, the place in space, the point of time where the mother's heart would break, filled all her horizon. In a faint way her sorrow was akin to His, who, though using our terms in measuring time, found them inadequate to measure what they contained, as He said, 'Mine hour is not yet come.' 'This is your hour and the power of darkness.'

The journey to Shiloh had been one of hope. It was a time of spring, for hope still blossomed. The thoughts came quick : 'Will this disguise cover me?' 'Is my present large enough?' above all, 'Will my child live?' But now autumn has come into her soul, the beginning of the winter of death, for hope has died. A storm is raging in her heart. A little tree had grown up there, and till now she had no idea how strong were its roots, and she scarce can tell what the issue will be. Will it in its fall only tear up the soil, or will the fall root out her very being? But onward she must go. Strange journey amid strange shifting scenes. 'Where am I?' 'What am I approaching?' and yet turn she dare not. One has written in a loving memorial of the beloved Prince recently removed, thus :

'We were speaking of a singular experience which some say that they have known, as it were a shifting of the centre of consciousness, a sensible transportation of the spirit into some distant scene, whose features flash in what seems reality before the waking eye. "Once," said the Prince, "I myself had that experience." It was at Cannes, he said, in boyhood; he was standing on the beach,

awake and in daylight, when suddenly the beach at Cannes became the beach at Osborne, and every well-known detail was reproduced with exactness. When the news of his death reached England, I could not but recall these words, and think how again that southern scene had vanished from his eyes, and revealed, not in transitory glimpse, but in steadfast vision, the likeness not of the earthly but of the eternal home.'

So may we say of the wife of Jeroboam. She looked at the lovely Tirzah, she saw the city-gate. She looked again : the city was the New Jerusalem, the gate was a Gate of Pearl. Thus far and thus far only may the mother accompany the child on the journey on which he too had set out. The tones of her husband's voice recall her to consciousness.

'He told me, sad at heart, my lord, the king,
How when I reached the city's gates again,
There came a breath and blew in on his cheeks—
For it had thundered, as I dreamt, and rained,
And all the lattice was refreshed with rain—
And he had turned toward it . . . smiled . . . and slept—
And as I entered still he slept . . . and smiled.'

CHAPTER XIV.

Prison Doors.

'He comes ! the pris'ners to release,
In Satan's bondage held ;
The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield.'

'The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors.'
--ACTS v. 19.

'Bound in affliction and iron ;'
'He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of
iron in sunder.'—PS. cvii. 10, 16.

BUT for sin there would have been no prisons, no gaolers. When sin entered into Eden, there surely followed the angel with the flaming sword to keep the way of the Tree of Life. Is not our whole world just one great prison-house ? 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' But the Lord Jesus has come in the guise of Prison-opener, Peace-pro-

claimer, with keys at His girdle to open every cell. And as He passes through the dark corners in which the prisoners hide, He leaves light and liberty behind. He Himself repeats the words which Isaiah had spoken of Him long before, 'Deliverance to the captives!'

This world is a prison-house; but how different the attitude of the prisoners! Let us go to Greene's deathbed, whom the historian calls the 'creator of our lighter English prose, and also a poet.' 'Hell and the after-world were the butts of his ceaseless mockery,' continues the writer. 'He died in poverty and self-reproach in the house of a poor shoemaker. "Oh that a year were granted me to live!" cried the young poet from his bed of death. "But I must die, of every man abhorred! Time, loosely spent, will not again be won! My time is loosely spent, and I undone!"'

Come with me to another deathbed far away in China. The speaker is also a prisoner chained to disease. But what is his attitude? What does he say? Listen to the missionary's letter, dated December 1, 1883:—

'Last Sabbath afternoon I went to the mission

hospital to see A-Tsu, a man of about forty, who is dying of consumption. He is quite emaciated, and looks like a skeleton. On asking him how he was, he told me that his feet were now beginning to swell, and he thought that an indication that his end was near. Then, in the prospect of dying, he began to exult with emotion, and to praise and bless God that he could now see the end of his journey. His eye beamed with joy, and his face brightened up. He seemed to look forward with rapture to being for ever with the Lord. He thanked God for the gospel of His grace, and us for being the heralds of the good tidings. I felt quite overcome, and could hardly refrain from weeping, and wished that when my own time came I might have as triumphant an end as dear A-Tsu.'

This world is a prison-house ; and strange scenes have been witnessed. Howard, of a spirit akin to his Master, and wishing to relieve the prisoners, 'saw everything with his own eyes, tested every suffering by his own experience. In one gaol he found a cell so narrow and noisome that the poor wretch who inhabited it begged as a mercy for hanging. Howard shut himself up in the cell,

and bore its darkness and foulness till nature could bear no more.' Yes, in the prison-house Christ has had busy servants, the Deliverer has loosed the bonds, and turned the prison into a palace. We would not have had the Epistle to the Ephesians or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* but for a prison. From Iaul's and Bunyan's cells a light has gone forth which will shine till time shall be no more.

This world is a prison-house; yet the prisoners have songs. And where shall we find the song of the prison-house? Where but in the hundred and seventh Psalm, which one has called a little psalm-book, which the believer carries in the ship of his experience, now down into the seething trough of the stormy sea, then upward, riding majestically on the crest of the billow, and which tells towards the close how the Lord 'setteth the poor on high after affliction.' But for the rough waters we should not have known the calm. One of the divisions of this psalm is specially a prison song: 'He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' And the captives go forth from the prison to *serve on earth*, still feeling like exiles looking for

another home with their mandate for the skies. They feel often like prisoners out in an airing-ground, bounded on all sides, but waiting for heaven to walk at liberty.

'Therefore be cheer'd ;
Make not your thoughts your prisons.'

Some, though set free, still love, with a strange perversity, to keep one chain about them. Do not cling to one sin when Jesus wants to set you completely free only to lead you into another blessed captivity. Ask the Father to send by night also to you the Angel of the Covenant to open your prison doors, to loose the last remaining chain.

This world is a prison-house ; and every day the prisoners are being set free to perfect freedom. The keepers are still seen standing outside the prison doors ; but the Lord has called the captives to Himself, and they have soared up, independent of all doors. Their house has the same number in the street, the same line in the Directory, their weapons of warfare and their earthly clothing still lie around ; but the Lord's prisoners have now enrolled their names above.

Three years ago we heard an address on Acts xii., which showed us a prison-house lighted up, a prisoner set free. These were the thoughts. When the time for the believer to go home has arrived, he will be much like Peter sleeping between two soldiers, bound with fetters. There will be the shining light, the angel's touch, the words, 'Arise up quickly,' and the falling chains. The believer will think he sees only a vision ; but, following the angel, the coming to himself will be on the golden pavement of the New Jerusalem.

' Behind, he hears Time's iron gates close faintly ;
He now is far from them ;
For he has reached the city of the saintly,
The New Jerusalem.'



CHAPTER XV.

Jesus the Door.

'He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by this Door.'

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the Door of the sheep.'—JOHN x. 7.

THIS Tenth of John is like a pathway, well worn by many little feet, for it is the Shepherd-chapter. We knew a boy who used to ask us to come to his little church in the house, and when we sat near the big Bible on the table, with the congregation of chairs and footstools and some living occupants of them, we always heard the same text given out: 'John, tenth chapter, fourteenth verse.'

Just think what it would be if the name Shepherd were blotted out of your Bible or your

hymn-book. Perhaps you have over your crib a picture of a Shepherd and a lamb, perhaps an illuminated text with these words, 'I am the good Shepherd.' Anyway, you have often loved, before you went to sleep, to say as your lullaby,—

'Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me ;
Bless Thy little lamb to-night.'

And the morning has found you returning to your favourite psalm,—

'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.'

Our text to-day is found in this Shepherd-chapter. This tenth of John is a key to many chapters in the Bible, and if you love and understand it, you will be able to go to others, such as Ezekiel fourteenth, and set them up for yourselves, as you do the blocks in your Scripture puzzle. For the good Shepherd Himself just drew pictures from what He saw, and we in turn make pictures for ourselves from what He tells us. 'It was whilst Jesus was conversing with the excommuni-

cated blind man, not within the Temple courts, and therefore, probably, on Olivet, His other usual resort, that He addressed to the Pharisees the Parable of the Good Shepherd. The sheep-fold on the slope of the hill, the wicket-gate, the keeper of the gate, the sheep, as in all southern countries, following, not preceding the shepherd whose voice they hear, may have been present to His mind then.' This extract from a book you may read when you are older—Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*—helps us to fill in the picture.

The good Shepherd says twice over, 'I am the Door ;' and one time He prefaces it with a 'Verily, verily,' that there may be no mistake. In your homes and in the country, you have seen all kinds of doors. You sometimes hear the little ones ask that their door be left just a little open that they may not feel lonely when nurse is away, in the few moments between the head going on the pillow and sleep overcoming the gleaming eyes.

In Highland glens you have tried to move gates which swung heavily on their hinges and scraped the heather, as you tried to make space enough for you and your pony. Or near a cottage door you may have had to lift down plank by plank to

unmake the gate beneath whose lowest spar a burn was running, or to build up one again of brushwood to exclude the rabbits or the roe-deer. And when, alas, in your haste, one gate, one little door, was left open, what havoc was wrought in a short five minutes by little creatures gaining admittance among flower-beds or fruit-trees !

Here is a story from a friend of what happened to him during a recent journey in Africa : 'In travelling through Central Africa I found the native villages, like the little walled towns of more civilized lands, surrounded by tall stockades of wood, canes, and thorns. The sole entrance is by a little gate, so narrow that only a single man can pass in at once. The moment the sun sets, the entire population return to their huts, and a heavy door is drawn across the opening in the stockade, and ceremoniously secured from the inside by thick beams of wood. So long as this gate is shut the villagers are safe from robbers, enemies, slave-hunters, or wild beasts. Once my camp was pitched within a small stockade, in which, for some cause or other, there was no door to draw across the opening. Suddenly, at midnight, I was startled by an agonizing cry. A lion had rushed

in among my men and buried its claws in the breast of the one who was sleeping nearest the door. But for the shouts of his companions, he would have been carried off into the forest and devoured.'

We have been trying to show you how useful, how necessary, doors are. We cannot imagine a house or a room without one, though we have read in the account of the recent Biblical discoveries in Egypt of chambers with no doors.

Come to the large picture of a gate in your Pilgrim's Progress. Round the archway the text is carved, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Praying is knocking ; and if you thus knock, you will not be kept waiting long outside. Here are some verses about the picture,—

" "I am only a little child, dear Lord,
And my feet are stained already with sin ;
But they said you had sent the children word
To come to the Gate and enter in."
"The Man at the Gate looked up and smiled,
A heavenly smile, and fair to see ;
And He opened, and bent to the pleading child,—
" I am willing, with all my heart," said He.'

Once you are within this Gate, Jesus becomes the

Door through which you go out and in for service. Through Him we would have you pass each morning, alike to study and pleasure. Only see to it that He always has the first place.

We are told in history how Edmund Rich, Archbishop of Canterbury, found his love of learning at Oxford bringing its troubles. ‘His Old Testament frowned down upon a love of secular learning, from which Edmund found it hard to wean himself. At last, in some hour of dream, the form of his dead mother floated into the room where the teacher stood among his mathematical diagrams. “What are these?” she seemed to say ; and seizing Edmund’s right hand, she drew on the palm three circles interlaced, each of which bore the name of one of the Persons of the Christian Trinity. “Be these,” she cried as her figure faded away, “thy diagrams henceforth, my son.”’

Many little hearts have learnt through sorrow to put Christ first, as Edmund Rich through the vision of his dead mother. But we would have you, in your bright sunny season of Spring, hear the Shepherd’s voice saying, ‘I am the Door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and *shall go in and out, and find pasture.*’

CHAPTER XVI.



Strive to Enter.

‘Lord, on us Thy Spirit pour,
Kneeling lowly at the door
Ere it close for evermore.

‘Grant us ‘neath Thy wings a place,
Lest we lose this day of grace
Ere we shall behold Thy face.’

‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.’—LUKE xiii. 24.

‘Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.’—LUKE xi. 52.

THE Lord Jesus from His seat on the mountain-top drew the picture of the strait gate and the narrow way ending with Life ; and of the wide gate and the broad way ending with Destruction. The broad way is crowded, the

narrow way has but few travellers. And as we look at their faces, we notice that those in the crowd are for the most part listless, undetermined, borne on with the current, whilst those on the narrow way are earnest, persevering, their faces set stedfastly in one direction.

While time lasts, there will ever be these two gates, these two roads, and these two companies. We remember how at a meeting of working men in a farm-steading some years ago, this verse helped some to decision. It is from the pen of Jeremiah : 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.'

When the Lord says 'strive,' He acknowledges that there will be difficulty. 'The strait gates from which Christ drew His simile are in retired corners, and must be sought for, and are opened only to those who knock ; and when the sun goes down, and the night comes on, they are shut and locked. It is then too late.' Some who would fain enter are kept back because they will not leave their sins outside the gate.

'Henry, a half-witted creature, set out from his house one winter day with an empty bag fastened upon his back. As he went along the road, he

picked up whatever rags and sticks came in his way, so that by night the bag was quite filled. Being tired, cold, and hungry, he bethought him of rest for the night ; and, seeing a light in the distance, he proceeded thither. That came from the window of a dwelling-house. He knocked at the door, and when it was opened he asked leave to enter. This was readily granted. But, on trying to enter, the bag of sticks and rags was found to bulge out so much as completely to prevent this. Again and again he tried, but in vain. Then the gentleman advised that the bag should be left outside, and offered to cut the string. To this, however, Henry would not consent. He would have the bag to come in, or remain outside. So the gentleman was obliged to close the door and leave Henry with his bag outside in the bitter cold. Morning dawned, and revealed the form of the poor man lying on the ground, not far from the door, with the bag still fastened on his back. He was cold, stiff, and dead.'

' Believers enter in
By Christ, the living gate ;
But they who will not leave their sin
Complain it is too strait.'

The smallness of the gates, the simplicity of the gospel message, sometimes makes those who seek to enter just miss the gate, as our friend did in the following story :—

‘On a very dark winter night, I was visiting for the first time a villa with an avenue. The gate was closed, and I tugged at it in vain. I concluded that something had gone wrong with the lock or hinges, and clambered over the garden wall. On my return I found a little gate standing open at the side of the big shut one. The pillar of the big gate had hid it from my view, and also the lamp that was over it. Had I examined the whole of the gateway, or had I approached on the side where the light was, I should have got in without any difficulty.’

Listen to His voice to-day who has a right to speak, for He has triumphed over the gates of hell and the grave. ‘These things saith He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth ; Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.’ You have been long enough lingering at the door. Perhaps when your hand has *been lifted* to knock, the world has pulled you back.

Make this your resolve :

‘The mistakes of my life have been many,
The sins of my heart have been more,
And I scarce can see for weeping ;
But I'll knock at the open door.

‘My mistakes His free grace will cover,
My sins He will wash away ;
And the feet that shrink and falter
Shall walk through the gates of day.’

Those who have entered in all tell you the same story. In his last hours Bishop Butler, the great theologian, rejoiced in this open door. One day, when he was depressed by bodily weakness, he said to Dr. Forster that he was still afraid to die. ‘My lord,’ said his chaplain, ‘you have forgotten that Jesus Christ is a Saviour.’ ‘True,’ was the reply ; ‘but how shall I know that He is a Saviour to *me*? ’ ‘My lord,’ rejoined Dr. Forster, ‘it is written, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” ’ ‘True,’ said the bishop ; ‘and I am surprised that, though I have read that Scripture a thousand times, I have never felt its value till this moment ; and now I die happy.’

In an old house, the drawing-room being found too small for meetings, the wall between it and the

library gave place to folding-doors which made the two rooms into one large one. Come to-day to Him who 'is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition.' 'Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'

To those who feel that the door is still a closed one, we give these words of Samuel Rutherford : 'Christ often heareth when He doth not answer. His not answering is an answer, and speaks thus : "Pray on, go on, and cry ; for the Lord holdeth His door fast bolted,—not to keep you out, but that you may knock, and knock."

To delay entering in, is madness. Not only for your own sakes do we urge this. For what of your homes?—your families? If you will not enter in yourself, Christ's words may be true of you : 'others entering in ye hindered.' The children who would follow if you went first will be easily turned aside from the narrow way. Think of being like a wooden barricade across a road, your very act and presence making others believe the way to be closed. Before you finish this chapter set out for the Gate, and you will find these *lines to be true :*

' Yet there is room ! still open stands the gate,
The gate of love ; it is not yet too late :
Room, room, still room ! oh, enter, enter now ! '

And then you will not be found among those unable to enter, or among the hinderers of others, but having entered yourself through the gate on earth, you will hear the glad summons, ' Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

' Ere night that gate may close, and seal thy doom :
Then the last, low, long cry : " No room, no room ! "
No room, no room ! Oh, woful cry, " No room ! "



CHAPTER XVII.
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Leaves from a Workman's Journal.

'Work, for the night is coming,
Work, thro' the morning hours,
Work, while the dew is sparkling,
Work, 'mid springing flowers ;
Work, when the day grows brighter,
Work, in the glowing sun ;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.'

'Some of my servants set I at the gates.'—NEH. xiii. 19.

NEHEMIAH is a great authority about gates. About forty times they are mentioned in his little book.

Josephus tells us, that as Nehemiah was walking before Susa, he heard some strangers speaking to one another in the Hebrew tongue ; so he went to them and asked from whence they came. When their answer was, that they came from Judea, he inquired of them in what condition Jerusalem was : and they replied that the walls were thrown down to the ground, that many were led away

captive, and that the roads were in the day-time found full of dead men. Hereupon Nehemiah shed tears, and, looking up to heaven, he said, 'How long, O Lord, wilt Thou overlook our nation, while it suffers so great miseries, and while we are made the prey and the spoil of all men?' And while he stayed at the gate and lamented thus, one told him that the king was going to sit down to supper; so he made haste, and went as he was, without washing himself, to minister to the king in his office of cup-bearer.

When he answers the king's question about his grief, he lays emphasis on the gates being consumed with fire. When he asks for a letter to Asaph the forester, it is to get timber for the gates.

The third chapter is like a bee-hive of busy workers flitting about where all are builders; and the words at the end of the verses sound like a hum of satisfaction, 'who laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.' The following extracts from Robinson's *Biblical Researches* are like glass doors through which we look in on the model hive where none are idlers:—

'It is obvious, in the account of the rebuilding

of the walls by Nehemiah, that the description begins at the Sheep-gate, and proceeds first northwards and so towards the left around the city till it again terminates at the same gate. This gives the probable order in which the ten gates there mentioned stood ; and the other two named elsewhere can be easily inserted. The ten gates mentioned in Neh. iii. are the following : Sheep-gate, vers. 1, 32 ; Fish-gate, ver. 3 ; Old-gate, ver. 6 ; Valley-gate, ver. 13 ; Dung-gate, ver. 14 ; Fountain-gate, ver. 15 ; Water-gate, ver. 26 ; Horse-gate, ver. 28 ; East-gate, ver. 29 ; Gate Miphkad, ver. 31. Also in xii. 39 we find the Prison-gate, perhaps the same with Miphkad ; and the Gate of Ephraim.'

When the walls are built and the register made, it is in the street before the Water-gate that Ezra, from his wooden pulpit, reads the law to the assembled people, and blesses them. It is the streets of the Water-gate and Gate of Ephraim that are for the time transformed into little forests of olive, pine, myrtle, and palm as the people sit in booths keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. It is in the street before the Water-gate that the people *weep when they hear the law.*

In the twelfth chapter we see another picture. The priests' sons with trumpets, and their brethren with David's instruments of music, with Ezra in front, climb the stairs of the city of David, until two processions of them that 'gave thanks in the house of God' stand still in the Prison-gate.

The little book closes on this faithful worker still with untiring zeal, unceasing energy, at his post of Gate-watcher, Gate-keeper. As the Creator rested in Eden on the Sabbath day, so in his beloved Jerusalem Nehemiah commands that there shall be rest also. He could not pass from our vision in a more lovely attitude, with a more beautiful command on his lips than this, 'I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath. . . . I commanded the Levites that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy.' The bent of his life is described in these verses, for, loving God with a whole heart, he loved his country and knit together the workers at the wall and gates into one brotherhood.

' When the five gateways of the soul
Are closing one by one,
When our being's currents slowly roll,
And life nigh done,
What shall our chiefest comfort be
Amid this misery ?

' Not to have said, as the fool said,
" Be merry, soul, rejoice ;
Thou hast laid up store for many days."
Oh, foolish voice !
Already at thy gate the feet
Of the corpse-bearers meet.

' That I have held each struggling soul
As of one kin and blood,
That one sure link doth all control
To one close brotherhood ;
For who the race of men doth love,
Loves also Him above.'

If Michael Angelo Buonarotti said of the doors of the Baptistry at Florence, executed by Lorenzo Ghiberti, when asked if he thought them beautiful, 'They are so beautiful that they might stand at the gates of Paradise,' we may to-day, as we look at the fading figure of this faithful, fervent worker, change the words, and say, 'He was worthy to be *gatekeeper in Paradise.*'

CHAPTER XVIII.

—o—
Outside the Door.

'Then up the utter darkness moved a sense
Of fluttering robes and sobs of penitence,
Though no man knew whereof it came or whence :

Lord, open unto us. It seemed a moan
More than a voice, and smitten hands alone
And fingers feeling blindly on the stone.
The door was all way round—there was no door,
Where everything was open just before—
To those within it seemed twelve pearls or more,
And every pearl one picture of the same,
And all the wall was ringing with a Name,
It ran through every jewel like a flame.
But all the echo that went wandering through
To that blind cry no crumb of comfort threw.
They closer pressed, and heard : I know not you.'

'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying : Lord, Lord, open unto us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not. . . .'

LUKE xiii. 25.

THERE is a solemn grandeur about this passage, a tone of authority. There seems a rhythm, a solemn cadence in the very words, 'When

once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door.' We would fain omit such a scene, but it was the Lord of love Himself who painted it. Our verse is just a miniature of the picture which we find full-size in the twenty-fifth of Matthew.

We all know the sadness and disappointment of those left outside on earth, as they come home from an expected pleasure, saying, 'We just missed it.' The wheels of the household do not seem to move easily again all that day. Adelaide Proctor, in her 'Angel Story,' has drawn a touching picture of a child looking at a beautiful garden from outside the gate :—

'There were trees with giant branches,
Velvet glades where shadows hide ;
There were speaking fountains glancing,
Flowers, which in luxurious pride
Even wafted breaths of perfume
To the child who stood outside.'

'He against the gate of iron
Pressed his wan and wistful face,
Gazing with an awe-struck pleasure
At the glories of the place ;
Never had his brightest day-dream
Shone with half such wondrous grace.'

There is also the sadness of those who have provided a feast or a pleasure for guests who have not availed themselves of it. You may have felt disappointed at the terms in which an invitation has been refused; but if it is once accepted, the name down on your list, the cover laid, and yet the friend does not appear, the repast seems incomplete. There is not only the vacant seat at the table, there seems also an empty space in your heart. We heard of a gathering where the large dinner table was not enough, and side tables had to be arranged, where one of the expected guests did not appear in his place. The next day the owner of the house shared the sorrow of the servants at the fate of an absent one. He had come ready for the feast, but hearing that the repast had begun and knowing that he was late, he turned on the doorstep and went away. He must have had a night of uneasiness, to say the least. What if any who read these lines are shut out for the long night of an eternity's regret?

If you miss a great treat on earth, of hearing some preacher, seeing some sight, there is always the hope that at some other time the door

of opportunity may open to you. Dante, in his well-known lines, shows that it is the loss of this hope that gives the awful solemnity to the shutting of the Door of which we are writing:—

“Through me you pass into the city of woe:
Through me you pass into eternal pain:
Through me among the people lost for aye.

• • •
All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”
Such characters in colour dim I marked
Over a portal’s lofty arch inscribed.’

But you live in days of hope, in sight of an open door. The card of invitation lies unanswered it may be, but still in your possession. Jesus says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.’

Some reader may open this book at the close of the year. The new year is like a lovely gateway of white marble on which the cold rays of a winter’s sun are shining. Do not begin it until you have first let Christ enter your heart. As you look into it, you feel sure that nature’s laws of day

and night, summer and winter, tides and winds, will hold good in it as the Creator has promised they shall do while the world lasts. Of one thing you cannot be sure, whether you shall reach the gateway at the farther end, for this new year may be your last.

This chapter is a knock at the door of your heart, an invitation. If you do not respond to His knock, your turn will surely come to knock, and knock unheard, or to go away with this terrible message from the lips of love, 'I know you not.' Open to Him immediately, utter one fervent petition, 'Lord, come in,' put your hand even now on the door-handle of your heart, lest an hour later these lines might be true of you, awaking in another world,—

' So near the door—and the door stood wide ;
Close to the port—but not inside !
Near to the fold—yet not within !
Almost resolved to give up sin !
Almost persuaded to count the cost ;
Almost a Christian—almost, yet lost.'

CHAPTER XIX.

Gates—Praise.

‘Hear what God the Lord hath spoken :
“O my people, faint and few,
Comfortless, afflicted, broken,
Fair abodes I build for you :
Thorns of heart-felt tribulation
Shall no more perplex your ways,
You shall name your walls Salvation,
And your gates shall all be Praise.”’

‘Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates
Praise.’—ISA. lx. 18.

‘And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; every several
gate was of one pearl.’—REV. xxi. 21.

‘THE keeper of the Gate called to a trumpeter
that was above, over the Gate, to entertain
Christiana with shouting, and sound of trumpet, for
joy. So he obeyed and sounded, and filled the
air with his melodious notes.’ So, when we come

up in thought to the Gate of the New Jerusalem, sounds come to us from over the Gate.

Isaiah tells us ‘the walls of the New Jerusalem are to be Salvation and her gates Praise.’ Instead of violence and destruction, the wall of defence is to be Salvation, and the opening into it Praise. But we do not wait for the New Jerusalem to begin our praise. The songs must be practised here.

At an exhibition you may, to amuse a child, have dropped a coin into the hand of some figure, and the touch set some beautiful music a-going. So some great mercy may have come into your life, and music has begun in your heart. Arches have been erected in memory of triumphs and battles. Now is the time to build for yourself a gateway of Praise.

A sufferer was lying thinking of the Gates of Pearl, and tried to find some texts with twelve words to make a gateway for herself. Here is one from David’s pen : ‘The Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory.’

You may have been lying singing a song without words in your heart to God, and some one unknown to you played music on an organ in the room below, that seemed exactly to suit your song.

Soon all our words and broken songs will be set to the music of the skies. And He listens, pleased already with the progress we have made. As a musician, to make his young pupil as little aware of his presence as possible, may go to some far corner of the room and turn the pages of a book, listening with keenest, finest perception all the while, so the Lord Jesus, in the gentlest way, listens, yet pardons our weaknesses and failings. When praise is perfect, we shall be perfect too; and to this day both He and we look forward with gladness.

After reading in Isaiah of the gates of carbuncles and borders of pleasant stones, we seem in fancy very near already to the Gates of Pearl. We read how there is a magic charm about the pearl, that has fascinated the world in various ages and countries, while its modest splendour and purity made it the favourite among Orientals. It was also thought to cure various diseases when boiled or bruised and taken with milk. ‘It also comforted the heart, and rendered the possessor chaste.’ And Ruskin says ‘Grey was the colour of the pearl, and suggested humility.’

Giovanna of Austria, wife of Francisco de'

Medici, took, as her device, the sun shining upon a pearl just emerged from the ocean, with the motto, *Tu splendorem, tu vigorem* ('Thou [givest] brightness, thou strength'), meaning that as the pearl derived all its whiteness, brilliancy, and firmness from the sun, so to heaven she looked for strength, virtue, and grace. And we too shall find that it is our Sun shining on the gates of pearl that gives them all their brightness.

We think the glory of the jewelled foundations, with all manner of precious stones, and the streets of gold would be blinding, but for the soft grey silvery light coming from the Gates of Pearl. Truly then Ezekiel's vision will be fulfilled: the glory of the Lord will come 'by the way of the gate,' while the Prince Himself goes out and in 'by the way of the porch of that gate.'

There will be no need for the putting on of linen garments when we as priests enter in at the gates of the inner court, nor for the putting off of woollen garments to serve in, for to us all will then be granted to be 'arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,' perpetually clean, worn by those enjoying perpetual youth. And Gates themselves will then have lost their proper use, for we read,

'The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.'

Some even on earth have glimpses of the gates of pearl before the time. We read lately of a little child of twelve who lay dying repeating our verse, 'Every several gate was of one pearl.' There was only one alteration. The tense was changed, for she was heard muttering to herself, 'Every several gate *is* a Gate of Pearl,' and with that she fell asleep.

'City of the pearl-bright portal,
 City of the jasper wall;
City of the golden pavement,
 Seat of endless festival.
City of Jehovah, Salem,
 City of eternity,
To thy bridal hall of gladness
 From this prison would I flee.
 Heir of glory,
 That shall be for thee and me.'

CHAPTER XX.

—o—

Old Gateways.

‘Open ye the gates.’—ISA. xxvi. 2.

THE gateway is vaulted, shady, and cool. The curious and vain resort thither to see and be seen. Some go to meet their associates; others to watch for returning friends, or to accompany those about to depart; while many gather there to hear the news, and to engage in trade and traffic.’

This is the description of a gateway in Palestine, taken from *The Land and the Book*. And Dr. Wylie tells us that only twenty-five years ago the gates of Jerusalem used to be closed at sunset, and no one after that hour could go in or out without a written order from the governor of Jerusalem. He goes on to say, ‘Mr. Hanneur

informed us that his family had in their possession one of these memorials of "Old Jerusalem." The document was fast becoming of historical interest, when unhappily, only a year before, it was destroyed.'

The study of this subject, 'Gates and Doors,' has so grown upon us that before we are aware we find that our intended space is gone, and much must be left untold. Those who read poetry will find much about them in the hymns we love ; while those who enjoy history can visit Old Gateways for themselves. They will find, as in the following paragraph, how important a place gates hold, giving even the name to the government of a country. 'At the mosque of Santa Sophia at Constantinople we obtain admittance through the principal entrance, the Sublime Porte (the lofty gate). It gives the Turkish Government its official designation, and reminds us of the custom in Bible times of dispensing justice at the gate.'

We keep to our subject, the Gates and Doors of the Bible, but even in it there are too many for the compass of this little book. We can only *select a few*, leaving out, of course, those at which *we have already sought instruction.*

When we were children, two new walks were made over little mounds of heather, rock, and fern, and afterwards bore the names of those who planned them. The path to be, was marked out with a piece of white stick, the gardener following at our back with his wood and hatchet. Sometimes a tree had to be felled, a boulder removed; which obstructed the view or path. Everything was sacrificed to getting the best peeps of the winding river. We should like in this chapter just to indicate points of view, or roads which will repay the making, leading to or from these Gateways of Scripture; leaving it to readers at their own leisure to make a road or erect a seat from which to enjoy the scene.

We take our first view where an angel's voice breaks the silence in the promise to Abraham: 'Blessing I will bless thee, . . . thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.'

The first scene at a gateway has a strange significance. 'Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake, . . . saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the

children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 'The field give I thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead.' We all pass under a gateway hearing such words at some period of our life, at once marking us out as only strangers here, and making us love the soil which is to receive our dead. For a while, when we were young, this world was very home-like. Then a time came when we could count our losses; then a time when perhaps we had, like Abraham, to buy a parcel of ground for our beloved dead.

Passing over much interesting country, we rest at the Gate of Samaria, where unbelief was punished and faith rewarded. The mighty man, the lord on whose hand the king leaned, said, to Elisha's prediction that a measure of fine flour would be sold for a shekel in the Gate of Samaria, 'If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?' and his punishment for unbelief was that the people trod him down in the gate. But the four lepers, the outcasts, said, in the 'entering in of the gate,' 'Why sit we here until we die?' And they did not keep *to themselves* their great success in spoiling the

camp of the Syrians, for they said, ‘We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.’ So they lighted the torch of good news, which passed on quickly from hand to hand. For the porter of the city told the other porters, who told the king’s house, and the king rose from his bed to command his servants. So let us do with our good tidings, our Evangel.

Mordecai has much to tell us from his seat in the king’s gate; but we can only refer our readers to his charming record.

Job enlists our attention as he gives us a picture of a scene in the gate, saying, ‘. . . When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up.’

David sings to us, as we pass, like an Alpine herd-boy on the heights, and he has given us the song which we in Scotland love to sing without a psalm-book, sometimes at the opening of a new church in the city, sometimes at a Highland communion among the hills,—

‘O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto :

Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.
For why? the Lord our God is good,
His mercy is for ever sure ;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.'

He will not let us leave his side till he has
thrilled us with such words as these :

'O set ye open unto me
The gates of righteousness :
Then will I enter into them,
And I the Lord will bless.

'This is the gate of God, by it
The just shall enter in.
Thee will I praise, for Thou me heard'st,
And hast my safety been.'

Jeremiah has a sermon ready for us in the Gate. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 'Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there His word, and say, "Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord." ' He cared not though his words brought him the stocks which hung in *the Gate of Benjamin*, or drew on his head the

condemnation of the princes in the Door of the Gate. There are trusty friends like Ebedmelech to go and complain of the injustice as the king sits in the Gate, and he knows that Jehovah is on his side. We get out of his discipline promises like this : ' Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: . . . For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.' And he lets us see that it is not a good thing to be without care, having neither bars nor gates, for it is a prophecy of calamity that is sent to such a nation.

As we pass this weeping prophet his lamentations linger on our ears. ' Her gates are sunk into the ground ; he hath destroyed and broken her bars.'

Daniel sitting in the Gate has wonderful stories to tell us also. Hosea has his Valley of Achor for a door of hope. Amos complains that the poor are turned aside in the gate ; while, as we leave the Old Testament land, Micah's grand words fill the

air like a clear trumpet note : ‘The breaker is come up before them : they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it : and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.’

We begin our New Testament journey with a scene where Christ is the preacher.

‘And again He entered into Capernaum after some days ; and it was noised that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door ; and He preached the word unto them.’ But for the crowded doorway, the impossibility of entrance, we might never have known the faith and courage which lay in the hearts of those four friends of the man sick of the palsy.

Luke lets us see another sufferer laid at the rich man’s gate, while from the same pen we have an account of a miracle worked beside a gate. We read of this gate : ‘Far more magnificent than any of them was the ninth or eastern gate, which formed the principal entrance into the Temple. The ascent to it was from the terrace by twelve easy steps. The gate itself was made of

dazzling Corinthian brass, most richly ornamented ; and so massive were its double doors that it needed the united strength of twenty men to open and close them. This was the "Beautiful Gate." This was a gate worthy of its name, a fitting spot for the first miracle to be wrought, as Peter's words added a new lustre to its dazzling brightness. Here power and perfume went forth from the name which will ever be as ointment poured forth, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' Peter got a sermon for the wondering crowd from the healed cripple at the gate which has given texts and sermons to the ages since. 'Why look ye so earnestly on us? . . . His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong.' And though He Himself was no longer with them, His name, which Mary had first breathed beside the Bethlehem manger, went forth to save the world. It was here that the lame man asked as a beggar and received as a prince. The Acts of the Apostles is full of incidents about gates and doors, such as the watching of the gates for Saul day and night to kill him, and the Door of Faith being opened unto the Gentiles, and the priests of Jupiter bringing oxen and garlands to the gates.

Early in Revelation we have the promise which many of us will carry up to Heaven's Gate, hardly letting it go there. It is a scene which we could not have imagined had we not the Scripture word—the King of Glory standing in the guise of a suppliant knocking at the sinner's door. We have heard the verse preached on so often, sung of so continually, painted so frequently, that it is to some as a tale that is told. Not so in heaven, for there it is the wondering theme of the song they sing, that He who was and is so high should stoop so low. And we have known a voice within, that like the Knocker outside would not be silenced.

' In the silent midnight watches
List—thy bosom door !
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh,
Knocketh evermore !
Say not 'tis thy pulse's beating :
'Tis thy heart of sin ;
'Tis thy Saviour knocks, and crieth,
" Rise and let me in ."

When He enters we understand all that was before a mystery. It will take the hours of eternity to tell all the story of that wondrous love, how in *the far back ages* before time was, He loved us, how

when time is no more He will love us still. He tells us how he came in the fulness of time to open the gate which our sin had locked, and the key had to be dipped in blood ere the rusty double lock would open. As we listen, we keep continuing our refrain :

‘ Oh, depth of mercy ! can it be
That gate was left ajar for me ?
For me, . . . for me ?
Was left ajar for me ? ’

He answers ‘ Yes, for thee.’ And a day will come when, as a nurse broke the summons gently to her patient by this word, ‘ The Master is come and calleth for thee,’ He too will come and say : ‘ A step farther. To-day I knock for admittance for thee at another door, the door of my Father’s house.’

As we have walked with Wisdom’s hand under the Gateways of earth, so now she leaves us at the Door of heaven. Farther we cannot now go, but up yonder we shall soar unhindered, and there we shall know even as also we are known. We part putting our reader’s hand into the hand of John the Divine. He leads us to an open Door,

beside which all other gates and doors fade into nothingness. With adoring love let us fix our eyes on the vision : ' I looked, and, behold a door was opened in heaven. . . . And, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone : and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.'

' I saw again. Behold ! Heaven's open door ;
Behold ! a throne,—the Seraphim stood o'er it,—
The white-robed elders fell upon the floor,
And flung their crowns before it.

• • • • •
' Who dreams of God when passionate youth is nigh,
When first life's weary waste his feet have trod—
Who seeth angels' footfalls in the sky,
Working the works of God;

' His sun shall fade as gently as it rose,
Through the dark woof of death's approaching nigh
His faith shall shoot, at life's prophetic close,
Some threads of golden light.

' For him the silver ladder shall be set—
His Saviour shall receive his latest breath—
He walketh to a fadeless coronet,
Up through the gate of death.

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